

State of California
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency
Highway Department of Transportation

HIGHWAY ROUTE MATTERS
Route Adoption as a Controlled Access
Resolution HRA 01-1
11-IMP-7 KP 1.9/10.9 (PM 1.2/6.8)
CTC Meeting: August 23-24, 2000

Prepared by:
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Agenda Item: 2.3a.1

Original Signed By
W.J. EVANS, Deputy Director
Finance
August 1, 2000

ADOPTION OF LOCATION FOR STATE HIGHWAY
As a Controlled Access Highway

Recommendation

Submitted for transmittal to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) are Highway Route Adoption Resolution HRA 01-1 and the map of a location for the State Highway Route 7. The Department recommends that the Commission approve the resolution and the route location map in accordance with the recommendation of the Deputy Director, Project Development. This resolution adopts a 9.0 kilometer (5.6 mile) location for State Highway Route 7 in the County of Imperial from State Highway Route 98 to Interstate 8. State Highway Route 7 is in the Freeway and Expressway System.

The proposal is documented in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) that was signed by the State on July 24, 2000. It is anticipated that FHWA (the NEPA lead agency) will sign the Notice of Determination in August of 2000. The Commission is acting on the findings in agenda Items 2.2c.3 a separate action. A copy of the executive summary from the FEIR has been sent to each Commission and a complete copy of the FEIR has been transmitted to the Commission staff.

Original Signed By_____

Recommended by: BRENT FELKER, Deputy Director
Project Development

Background

The proposed project is located approximately 10.5 kilometers (6.5 miles) east of the City of Calexico and is just north of the new Calexico East Federal Port of Entry (POE) along the U.S./Mexico International Border in Imperial County. SR-7 was added to the State Highway System by Assembly Bill 2785 in September 1990 and is included in the Freeway and Expressway System.

The construction of a new Port of Entry (POE) and the proposal for SR-7 were initiated to accommodate the expected increase in trade growth between the U.S. and Mexico as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). SR-7, SR-86, and SR-111 were all identified as being necessary for transit and border related improvements due to the increasing rate of travel and trade between the U. S. and Mexico. The new POE as well as the initial segment of SR-7 from the border to SR-98 were opened in 1996.

In addition to the international and commercial traffic, an extension of SR-7 would also serve regional, commuter, and recreational traffic. Studies show that the existing segment of SR-7 has an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume of 7,500. Approximately 19% of this volume are trucks. Traffic from SR-7 must currently use SR-98 through Calexico's central business district and then either onto SR-111 or local roads to access I-8. SR-98 has an ADT of 10,400. During peak hours, traffic conditions within the city are typically at unstable flow, with delays and congestion occurring at several intersections. Additional traffic will be generated from several planned residential and commercial developments on the outskirts of Calexico. It is anticipated that the traffic on SR-98 will quadruple by the year 2020 without the proposed extension. An evaluation of reported accidents on segments of SR-111 and SR-98 prior to the opening of the POE revealed that the accident rate on SR-98 within the Calexico City limits were about 40% greater than average rates for similar facilities. If SR-7 is extended approximately 10,000 vehicles will be diverted from SR-98 based on traffic estimates for the year 2020.

Proposal

Five alignment alternatives were considered for this segment of SR-7. The selected alternative for the project is a four-lane divided expressway to be constructed from the terminus of the first segment of SR-7 to I-8. The alignment adjoins the existing Orchard Road and also utilizes the existing Orchard Road Interchange at I-8. As such, it minimizes impacts to the farmland, reduces costs by utilizing the existing interchange at I-8, and it has the least environmental impacts of the alternatives. This alternative is the most compatible with the Imperial County Transportation Plan, and SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan.

The project is included in the 1996 STIP and 1998 STIP for a total escalated cost of \$35,400,000 for right of way and construction. It is anticipated that construction will begin in the 2001/2002 fiscal year.

Coordination

On December 14, 1998 a public hearing was held to obtain public comments on the Environmental Document. Concerns raised by the public were directed at selecting an alternative that minimized impacts to farmlands, provided safe access across the expressway and minimized residential displacements. Modifications were made to project features as a result of comments received. The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) expressed concerns regarding modifications to their facilities. The IID owns and operates the system of irrigation canals and drains, as well as power utilities servicing the area. Coordination with the IID will be necessary for any design modifications to IID owned facilities. The Imperial County Board of Supervisors has subsequently endorsed the Orchard Road Alternative. The FEIS/FEIR was prepared by Caltrans and approved by Caltrans on July 24, 2000. A Controlled Access Highway Agreement will be necessary to document an understanding between Caltrans and Imperial County on local road closures and access to the proposed expressway.

Conclusion

The route adoption is needed to alleviate traffic congestion, improve safety, and provide an alternative route for cross-border travel within the region as well as improving the access to the new POE in Calexico.

**CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Resolution Adopting Controlled Access Highway Location
11-IMP-7 KP 1.9/10.9 (PM 1.2/6.8)**

Resolution HRA 01-1

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation has completed studies and the public hearing process relative to the location for State Highway Route 7 from State Route 98 to Interstate 8 near Calexico; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation has completed an Environmental Impact Report in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and Department Regulations, and the studies have determined that the location of the preferred alternative for State Route 7 is along the Alternative 1 Orchard Road Alignment from SR 98 to Interstate 8; and

WHEREAS, the California Transportation Commission, in Resolution E-01-6 has adopted findings with a Statement of Overriding Considerations supporting approval of the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the California Transportation Commission that pursuant to the authority vested in it by law, this Commission does hereby select, adopt and determine the location of that segment of State Highway Route 7 in the County of Imperial from State Highway Route 98 [Kilo Post 1.9 (Post Mile 1.2)] to Interstate 8 [(Kilo Post 10.9 (Post Mile 6.8))], and officially designated as 11-IMP-7, as said location is shown on the map submitted on August 7, 2000 by Robert L. Buckley, Chief Design Engineer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said segment of State highway is hereby declared a Controlled Access Highway, as said term is defined in the Streets and Highways Code, and shall have the status of an expressway for all purposes provided by law and is hereby designated a part of the California Freeway and Expressway System; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission has found and determined and hereby declares that such the location of said State highway is for the best interest of the State.